

What Does Constitutional Amendment No. 7 Ask?

"Shall Article IV Sections 47(a), 47(b), and 47(c) of the Missouri Constitution be amended to extend for ten years the sales and use tax of one-tenth-of-one-percent with such tax revenues being used for soil and water conservation and state parks and further amended to require those tax revenues be spent and used pursuant to certain purposes as defined by state law?"

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Parks and Soils:

Preserving the Quality

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PRESERVING THE QUALITY

Two of Missouri's greatest natural resources are its state parks and fertile topsoil. In 1984, Missouri voters showed their commitment to preserving these resources by approving the one-tenth-of-one-percent sales tax for state parks and to help stop soil erosion.

Before the tax, these two resources were in trouble. The state park system, potentially one of the best in the nation, had begun to deteriorate from a lack of funds. Missouri also had the second-highest rate of soil erosion in the country, with more than 200 million tons of precious topsoil washed and blown away each year. These problems also affected two of Missouri's most important industries — tourism, which ranks second in the state, and agriculture, which ranks third.

What's Been Done...

With funds from the parks-and-soils sales tax, state parks and historic sites have been repaired and improved;

- Campgrounds have been renovated and improved;
- Facilities such as dining lodges, motels, picnic shelters, and historic structures have been repaired;
- New facilities such as restrooms, picnic shelters, and cabins have been built;
- New parks and sites have been developed and opened to the public; and
- Additional seasonal employees have been hired to increase safety, give more programs and tours, and keep the sites clean.

The funds have also been used to finance five soil-conservation programs:

- Cost-share, which gives financial assistance to farmers who implement soil-conservation practices such as terracing and reduced-tillage systems;
- Loan interest-share, which provides interest rebates for loans to install conservation systems and buy conservation equipment;
- SALT (Special Area Land Treatment), which allows districts to target small watershed areas for conservation treatment;
- Soil surveys, which produces maps and information on soil types of particular areas; and
- Technical, clerical, and administrative assistance for the state's 112 soil and water districts, which work directly with landowners.



Where Do We Stand Now?

The current sales tax expires in September 1989. Through an initiative petition drive by Missouri citizens, a ten-year extension of the sales tax was placed on the November 1988 ballot. Constitutional Amendment No. 7 is not a tax increase — it simply extends the present one-tenth-of-one-percent sales tax for ten more years.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The state park system must have an adequate funding source in order to maintain the quality services expected by the public. Future sales-tax money will be used to continue the repairs, renovations, and improvements to the facilities as well as provide security, give more interpretive programs and tours, and keep the sites clean.

Although about 20,000 soil-conservation measures have been applied to more than three million acres of land as a result of the tax, much more land is still unprotected. Over the next ten years, plans call for more than eight million acres to be protected. It takes more than 100 years to create one inch of topsoil, but that same inch of unprotected soil can be washed away in an afternoon thunderstorm.

The sales-tax extension will provide continued funding for the five current soil-conservation programs, which will be guided by research to solve soil-erosion problems. By continuing to fund these soil-erosion practices, Missouri, by the year 2000, can reach its goal of reducing soil loss to acceptable levels.